

MODERN SCIENCE INTERPRETING YOUR DREAMS

It Finds They Have a Definite Meaning, but Relate to the Past and Not to the Future

Much that is new to the popular mind with respect to the phenomenon of dreams was brought out in the papers read and the subsequent discussion at the last meeting of the New York Academy of Medicine, at which the psychological theories of Freud were under consideration.

Of the two lines of research which are

out here must have been depressed on emerging from his reverie.

In almost all cases observed by Dr. Brill these three stages could be distinguished, and usually the first stage was preceded by a period of craving, as in the following case, which he cited.

A man who said that was a weaver by trade complained of strange thoughts



THE WEAVER'S DREAM.

being followed by investigators at the present time, the physiological is concerned with the physical state of brain and nerve cells during the mental processes being studied, while the psychological line of attack deals exclusively with the subjective aspect of the question, with memories, repressed tendencies, sex peculiarities and the like. The academy's recent meeting considered only the latter method and examined some of the results obtained by psycho-analysis as applied to the dream state and to the many neuroses or mental disorders generally termed insanity.

A. A. Brill, Ph. D., M. D., clinical assistant in psychiatry and neurology in Columbia University, who is an authority on dreams and is well known as an exponent of the views of the famous Vienna professor Freud, whose translator he is, read a paper on the hysterical dreamy states, describing day dreams and citing many interesting cases which had come under his observation.

"From the study of dreams," said he, "we have learned that no matter how absurd a dream may seem, it nevertheless contains sense and meaning if we find its latent content, and that every dream, and for that matter every psychotic symptom, contains the hidden fulfillment of a repressed wish, which usually refers to the two great impulses, hunger and love."

"The characteristics of these dreamy states will be best described by recalling to you the familiar old fable which is said to have originated in India and passed from the Sanskrit versions with many variations into many languages. The story tells how an Oriental glass vender sat cross-legged with his basket of glassware in front of him. While wishing for purchasers he merged into the following reverie:

"I sell this whole basket of glass I shall have ten dinars. I will then buy glassware for the whole sum, and when that is sold I shall have twenty dinars. I will then buy glass for twenty dinars and sell it for forty dinars."

"In his reverie he kept on doubling his fortune in this way until he was immensely rich. He bought enchanted palaces, lived in luxury and lavished fortunes. His fancies became more and more extravagant, he was very happy and elated, when a slight movement suddenly reminded him of his basket, and the thought flashed through his mind, 'What's the use of bothering with such worthless stuff? and with this he kicked the basket over. The clanging of broken glass interrupted his day dream and brought him back to himself."

"Let us for a moment think of this story, which if not true is well founded, and examine the different mental operations that enter into its formation. It shows the following well defined stages.

Interpretation of Dreams.

"There is a first stage of fantastic exaltation the content of which deals with the individual's hopes and aspirations. The glass vender is in a state of euphoria—well being; from a poor man he is suddenly transformed into a man of wealth, and his fortune is rapidly increasing. This is followed by a stage of dreamlike withdrawal from reality. He is no longer controlled by logical judgment and reasoning; his fancies therefore run riot, as it were; everything is changed; it is like a dream where time, space and natural obstacles are absent. He amasses an enormous fortune and owns palaces, in brief he is no longer himself."

"This is followed by a very rapid third stage, which is distinguished by a suspension of consciousness, an absent-mindedness, during which there are no thoughts so to speak, and the whole episode is followed by depression characterized by anxiety with its concomitant manifestation. I need hardly say that

which interfered with his work, in which great concentration of attention is needed, as much counting has to be done. Unconsciously he would stop weaving, forget his work and continue dreaming until aroused. One of his experiences is given in his own words.

"I am working and unconsciously I begin to think what I would do if I had \$2,000. I start a shop and soon earn a lot of money because I oppress my employees. With the money thus gained I open a big factory and employ a lot of greenhorns, whom I force to work long hours for very little pay. I enlarge my business; I have hundreds of people working for me; I become greater and greater. . . . when I suddenly find myself crying because I have lost all my money in Wall Street."

Many more day dreams of the same nature were cited. All were of the same nature and dealt with wealth or murder. And all, according to Dr. Brill, yield a simple explanation under a careful analysis of the individual's past mental experiences. Dreams are never senseless jumbles, but always perfect psychological mechanisms with a definite meaning and a wish fulfillment.

He goes on to show the necessity in interpreting dreams of having a knowledge of the subject extending back into infancy, for many of their components are partial impulses which have run through a definite evolution beginning in childhood. These impulses, active in infancy, are normally gradually repressed, leaving only slight traces of their existence; but they are nevertheless the most prolific source of dream material and of neurosis.

For instance, he called attention to the striking natural qualities in children of cruelty and exhibitionism, which, when repressed by a process of training and education, form certain reactions like sympathy and modesty which go to make up the character of the individual. But as no impulse is entirely suspended one can always find some traces of it in the individual's character and in certain mental states it will be manifested.

When seen at his home Dr. Brill commented to discuss in fuller detail the recent changes in the attitude of science

toward dreams and the related phenomenon of neurosis or abnormal mental activity.

Not a Senseless Jumble.

"Since the early Greek period," said he, "numerous theories have been propounded and entertained in the realms of religion and of science, but not until within recent years has investigation of the dream proceeded on a true psychological basis."

"It would be superfluous and quite impossible to review the many curious theories held at different epochs in the world's history concerning the dream; suffice it to say that ancient and modern differ very little in their views. The ancient Greeks believed that the dream was an inspiration of the gods, that it was simply a warning or prophecy of things to come, and they always gave credence to it. Kindred thoughts are expressed in the Bible. Joseph interpreted all dreams as a foreboding of the future—'What God is about to do he sheweth unto Pharaoh,' and all the Scriptures inform us steps were immediately taken to prepare for the approaching famine."

"These views have come down to us traditionally, and disregarding the numerous scientific and pseudo-scientific theories we may say that the present popular belief in dreams differs in no wise from that of the classical Greeks and ancient Egyptians. Every race and religion still looks upon the dream as something supernatural and objective, as an inspiration coming from above, and the laity still continues to believe in its re-

lated phenomenon of neurosis or abnormal mental activity.

"The dream is not a senseless jumble, but a perfect mechanism, and when analyzed it is found to contain the fulfillment of a wish; it always treats of the innermost thoughts of personality, and for that reason gives us the best access to the unconscious. No psycho-analysis is complete, nay possible, without the analysis of dreams. The dream not only helps to interpret symptoms but is often an invaluable instrument in diagnosis and treatment. The causative factors of many neuroses are extremely vague and usually unconscious to the patient, and it is by means of the dream that the underlying etiological or causative factors are disclosed."

Psychic Censorship.

"In order to understand the mechanism of dreams it will be necessary to bear in mind Freud's conception of repression. To forget is a part of human nature; this is so obvious that we never even stop to think about it. Yet when we examine the things forgotten we soon find that there is a method in forgetting; our forgetting seems to follow a kind of selection."

"It was Freud who first called attention to the motives for forgetting. If we exclude organic brain disturbances, we find that we are most apt to forget painful or disagreeable impressions. This forgetting as every one knows is purposeful and desired. The individual strives

happens that such phantasies are repressed before they are really grasped by full consciousness. The repressed material is pushed into the unconscious and there remains in a dormant state. Now and then it is recalled by some association but like disturbed ghosts returns soon to its resting place."

"In brief, both normal and neurotic individuals possess a certain amount of repression. In the former this usually remains inert, manifesting itself only now and then in psychopathological forms in addition to the symptoms of the neurosis or psychosis. But no matter in what form the repression comes to the surface, whether in the form of dreams, in psychoneurotic symptoms, or in the utterances or manifestations of the insane, it is always so distorted as to be unrecognizable to the individual."

"What causes this distortion? When we examine the literature of the past and present we observe that writers frequently resort to all sorts of devices, euphemisms and symbolisms when they wish to express something which would sound either harsh or objectionable to polite society. The censor has been established by society for its own protection. In the same way the distortions of the dream and those apparent in psychotic symptoms are the work of the psychic censor. This is a protective mechanism for the good of the organism."

Three Classes of Dreams.

Without the use of unfamiliar terminology Dr. Brill succeeded in giving the

Forgotten Things Sometimes Get Past the Psychic Censor in the Brain While People Sleep

translated into the latent thoughts, which always show the fulfillment of a wish. In this respect dreams are divided into three classes:

"1. Those which represent an unexpressed wish as fulfilled, as seen in the so-called 'convenience' dream and in children's dreams. For instance we often dream of enjoying cold fresh water after upper of sardines, olives or other salty food. The thirst incites the dream which tries to appease the sleeper so as to avoid disturbance of sleep. A boy of 5 dreams of finding pennies and nickels, and on awakening expresses his disappointment."

"2. Those which represent the realization of a repressed wish in an entirely concealed form."

"3. Those which represent the realization of a repressed wish in a form insufficiently or only partially concealed. The last group of dreams is usually accompanied by fear, which interrupts the dream and which takes the place of the distortion found in the second group."

The interesting process called "dream work" by which the transformation of the latent into the manifest content of the dream is effected Dr. Brill accounts for by the following theory:

"During our waking state a number of thought structures are constantly being formed. This activity is never finished during the day and the sum of energy required for the production of these thoughts would be sufficient to hold the interest of the individual to such an extent as to interfere with sleep."

"These day remnants are therefore changed into dreams by the dream work and the elements threatening disturbance of sleep are thus removed. The dream is therefore the guardian of sleep. But in order that the work of the dream may act the day remnants must be capable of wish formation, for it is the wish that forms the nucleus of the dream."

Relate to the Past. "We are struck by the marked condensation which takes place in the transformation of the thought into the content of the dream. This condensation is effected by the omission and the subsequent compression of syllables, words, pictures or situations which have been present in the thoughts underlying the dream. And this accounts for the many gaps, absurdities and neologisms in the manifest content of a dream."

"Another effect of the dream work is brought about by the process of displacement. Thus the elements which seem most conspicuous in the content of the dream do not necessarily have corresponding importance in the thoughts of the dream. An insignificant element may represent the main thought. Events, thoughts, sentences, words and pictures may be turned around."

To these two processes of condensation and displacement the formation of the dream is chiefly due."

It has always been the symbolism of the dream and its realization which makes the appeal to the non-scientific curiosity. According to the translator of Freud, "the symbolism in the dream is the same to-day as it was in Biblical times when Joseph acted the part of the oniroscopist and as we still see it in the dream books. But whereas the ancients and the laity of to-day ignore their own subjective mind and seek interpretation from magicians and dream books, we allow the dreamer to interpret his own dreams and to find the symbolism in his own mind. What we do is simply to call his attention to the different connections which he himself generally cannot see because of his own critique, prejudices and resistances."

"We also differ from the ancients and laity by not seeing in the dream the future but rather the past. Yet, in a way, the dream is also related to the future inasmuch as its fulfilled wish represents what we are striving for. This, in my opinion, explains the ancient and modern superstition regarding the future realization of dreams. To take another case which came to my notice and which shows how there are dreams which continue to manifest themselves for weeks and months until the wish they contain is actually realized."

His Dream Came True.

"A chronic alcoholic, showing delusions of jealousy, disliked a dog because his wife 'was more attached to the dog than to him.' He continued to dream at different times that the dog was run over or taken away by the dog catcher, until one day during his wife's absence he really disposed of it. Here the dream ostensibly treated of the future, at least, so the wife thought on her return home."

"Poor Fido," she exclaimed. "My husband John dreamed only last week that he was caught by the dog catchers and now the dream has come true."

"This is the so-called 'resolution dream.' The person resolved, perhaps unconsciously, to do a certain thing and the dream continues to represent it as realized until it is actually accomplished. This explains the mechanism of the 'dreams that come true.'"

"The realization of our waking dreams," concluded Dr. Brill, "shows precisely the same mechanisms. This can be observed not only in the individual but in whole races. We all know that the leitmotif of orthodox Judaism is and always has been the reestablishment of a Jewish nationality, the return to Jerusalem, and should Zionism ever succeed in obtaining Palestine, the Biblical dreams, the prophecies, would be considered as having 'come true.' Popular language expresses the idea in the saying, 'Where there is a will there is a way.'"



THE GLASS VENDER'S DREAM.

ality. The gambler dreams his horses or lottery numbers, the Indian medicine man dreams his remedies, and seldom we hear even of 'dreams coming true.'

"Modern psychology has continued the work of the ancient writers and as a result we have numerous valuable contributions to the problem of the dream. Numerous attempts have been made to show the relation of the dream to normal and abnormal life, but so far as I know no author has solved the problem of the dream so ingeniously and successfully

at all times to rid himself of the unbearable either by setting the situation in question when possible or by directly crowding it out of his mind. When we meet with mishaps or failures to which we cannot adequately react, we grieve over them for a time and then make desperate efforts to forget them—that is, we repress them."

"Moreover, the phantasies which are common to both normal and abnormal persons may be of a disagreeable nature or present an unattainable object, and may therefore be repressed. It often

layman a fairly accurate notion of the components of a dream which he defines as the manifest and the latent dream contents."

"The former," he goes on to explain, "comprise all the delusive sensory impressions which are recalled by the dreamer on awakening; while the latter comprise the fundamental thoughts of the dream as they existed before being subjected to the distortion of the psychic censor. The manifest content of the dream seems absurd and incoherent, but by psycho-analysis it can readily be



THE BOY'S DREAM.

PICTURESQUE CEREMONIES AT A HIGH CASTE HINDU WEDDING

Few foreigners in India have the privilege of witnessing a high caste Hindu wedding and only special circumstances enabled the writer to be present at the ceremonies described here.

Subhoda, the barber, had arranged a marriage between Anandi, only daughter of Dhola Bukah, a wealthy member of the Kahatriya caste, and Surindro Tagore of the same caste. That is one function of barbers in India. Anandi was not quite 10. Surindro was just 18. Anandi had never seen her future husband. Nobody had ever thought of asking the opinion of either of the most interested parties as to the proposed marriage.

The house of Dhola Bukah was built around a court. One side of this enclosure was given up to the women and children. As soon as the marriage was decided on Dhola Bukah's entire household, consisting of about eighty people, gave itself over to the bustle of preparation. Endless varieties of sweetmeats and curries had to be made. Then there was the daily exchange of presents between the two families.

The expense of a Hindu wedding comes upon the bride's father, and they are so great that a family sometimes is ruined or impoverished for many years by the marriage of a daughter. The next most costly affair is the burial service. Should the head of the family

escape bankruptcy when his daughter is married, the eldest son is almost sure to be ruined when he buries his father.

The woman barber, who is another great institution in India, came every day. For two weeks she bathed Anandi frequently in perfumed water. Every day the girl's hands and feet got an application of henna. For the last four days Anandi was compelled to sit much of the time holding a small vessel which looked like a teaspoon with a cover. This contained the dye with which the bride's eyelids were being blackened. On the evening of the wedding day Anandi was bathed in rose water and her hands and feet got a last application of henna.

She was dressed in a red silk sarree embroidered with gold and finished with a golden border at the bottom. Around her waist were wound chains of gold, which were fastened by gorgeous buckles set with jewels.

Her arms from the shoulder to the wrist were covered with armlets and bracelets. Close under her throat was a necklace of pearls, below which hung a dozen or more gold chains. Her ears, which had been pierced in six places, had earrings of the workmanship suspended from each hole. From where the hair met the forehead was hung a fringe of gold and pearls. On her ankles were gold bangles. All of this gold would have proved a heavy burden to the bride

if she had been obliged to walk, but she was not. In another part of the house the gurus of the two families were laying down the law to the two fathers-in-law, making the necessary settlements and promises. This ceremony, which is tedious and lasted several hours, was enlivened by the babus who went among the guests and sprinkled them with rose water which was carried in silver vases. Young boys in gay wedding attire passed from guest to guest throwing around the neck of each one a wreath of small white flowers. Still others glided among the guests of the higher caste offering costly and delicate perfumes.

Then upon the ears of the guests burst the cry, "The bridegroom comes!" All heads were turned to see six little girls who could not have been over 8 years of age bearing lighted torches run through the court and out into the street and lead Surindro in.

The bridegroom was seated upon a rug placed in the centre of the court for him. While he was seated on this rug, and it was as much as an hour, he was instructed in his marital rights and duties by the family guru.

A number of women bore trays loaded with different kinds of fruit. The women marched around the bridegroom seven times, the mother pouring the water gently out of the chhatree so that it formed a circle around Surindro. On the seventh round, when she was standing behind him, she suddenly threw the tray of burning coals over his head. They glanced off his white sari, conical hat and fell to his feet in front of him.

The mother-in-law-to-be now loosened the tray and removed it from her head. Turning it upside down on the floor she stood upon it and with her two hands closed together she touched the forehead, lips and chin of her future son-in-law with oil, plantain and salt. She then stepped aside and the bride was brought in.

A number of symbolic figures had been chalked upon a board. On top of these figures the bride was seated and then carried into the room by the barber and his assistants. Within the circle which

had been made by the water the mother had spilled Anandi was carried around Surindro six times. The board was then lowered from the shoulders that bore it and the bride was placed at her husband's feet.

During all this ceremony the bridegroom had never moved a muscle. The barber and his assistants now lifted Anandi to the level of Surindro's face, underneath a large sheet which had been stretched over their heads. The bride's mother and another woman, near of kin, were on either side of the bride. Each woman held a light close to the face of the bride and bridegroom and the sarree was removed from the bride's face.

Anandi covered her face with her hands and sobbed softly; nor could Surindro master up courage to look at his partner for life; but they were kept in the same position for five minutes, while the barber alternated the blowing of the horn with wild shrieks, which were supposed to bring down curses upon the heads of any who might speak ill of the bridal pair.

The sheets were then carried away and the bridegroom walked into the gods' house. The barber and his assistants carried the bride in just after her husband. Within a circle chalked on the floor the bride and bridegroom were seated opposite one another; between them was a vase filled with flowers. On this was the back of the bridegroom's hand was placed, while

the back of the bride's hand was placed in his palm. The two hands were then bound together with wreaths of flowers, while in them the marriage fee was placed.

Each family guru laid down the law to the opposing father-in-law; but not one word was said to the bridal couple. At the side of the bride's father was a large dish filled with water from the sacred Ganges into which he had dropped a ruby ring and a thin iron bracelet. The bracelet was given to the bride and the ring to the bridegroom, who were both sprinkled with some of the sacred water and the flowers were thrown at them.

The bride, still on the plank, was lifted and carried, first to the right side of the room and then to the left. The sarrees of the bride and bridegroom were next tied together. This made them husband and wife.

After the marriage knot had thus been tied the bride was placed on her feet, standing in front of her husband with her back toward him. The attendants placed in her hand a plate upon which were some rice and some plantain, while a wisp of lighted straw was thrown at her feet. The bride was then conducted to her husband's side; in the parting of her hair at the front some red powder was rubbed. This red powder may be worn by wives only never by maids or widows, and the chhatree, which she now donned for the first time, was drawn over her face.